

CITY OF BALTIMORE

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

KHALIL ZAIED, Director
417 E. Fayette Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

May 24, 2012

Mary Pat Clarke
Baltimore City Council, 14th District
100 North Holiday Street, City Hall Room 550
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: 39th Street Median Seeding and Fence between N. University Parkway and Canterbury Road

Dear Councilmember Clarke:

DOT Engineering and Construction (TEC) received requests from the Tuscany Canterbury Neighborhood Association (TCNA) in the fall of 2011 regarding the condition of the median and if BCDOT could remedy the situation. TEC asked the Maintenance Division to investigate the median and make recommendations. The Maintenance Division visited the site and reviewed their records and reported that they had overseeded the median several times with no positive outcome for the seeding efforts. TEC requested that the consultant landscape under contract with TEC review the site and make recommendations. An existing conditions report and proposed median landscape plan was prepared and reviewed internally by TEC. The cost of implementing the plan was prohibitive and the landscape plan was unfunded. The plan prepared for TEC had an estimated installation cost of \$170,000.

In December 2011, DOT Planning was requested to review existing conditions along the 39th Street median and to review the landscape plan prepared for TEC that was cost prohibitive. The budget for the median work was \$20,000.00.

The main issue of the median is foot traffic wear on the existing grass. The result is thin grass with limited growth, compacted topsoil with areas of no vegetation and unsightly looking especially after rain.

In order to green the median with grass, pedestrians and vehicles need to be prevented from continuing to compact the topsoil and wear down the grass while maintaining access to the businesses and housing located along 39th Street.

DOT asked the City Forester to review the site and get recommendations for greening the median. In March the BCDOT project manager and Recreation and Parks met on site to review the median conditions. The existing trees in the median were observed to be in good condition. The median soil was observed to be compacted, the edges showed signs of damage from roadway silt, and the grass were observed to be thin, shaded out, and not in good condition. Recreation and Parks recommended that the soil be aerated, and the seeding be done using slice seeding and overseeding. Keeping pedestrians and vehicles off the median was also needed to allow the grass time to germinate, grow and reestablish. The other side of the median from the Broadview apartments to Canterbury Road was thin, but in fairly good condition.



DOT met with the TCNA representatives on March 5, 2012 to review the proposed seeding and fence installation. The community Association confirmed that they would notify the residents and others of the proposed work.

To maximize the budget given for the work, the median between N. University Parkway and the roadway break at the Broadview apartments was seeded. Recreation and Parks was asked to aerate the soil and slice seed then overseed the area. A special shade seed mix was selected given the conditions of the area. The median was overseeded the weekend of April 7, 2012.

Keeping pedestrians off the median while the seed could establish was needed and the cost effective solution was a fence down the center of the median. The fence, Barcelona was selected at a 6-foot height was installed by Long Fence including installation. The fence was placed in the center for the entire median, at the request of the TCNA representatives (two sections) and was installed April 13, 2012.

With regards to your specific questions to Valorie LaCour in an email dated May 21, 2012 6:45PM, the following are DOT's responses:

- 1) WHERE did the seeding/"over-seeding" occur along this median, the seeding which this fence is supposed to protect by blocking pedestrian crossing of the median? I just walked the length of the median on both sides (but NOT on any obvious seeding.).

The median itself is intersected for traffic use in front of the Broadview Apartments entrance at 105 West 39th. On the median stretch from that break at 105 West 39th Street east to Canterbury Road, there's a fence, but I saw no evidence of seeding at all, although I may be wrong. On the median stretch from the traffic break west to University Parkway, I saw some patches of dirt covered with straw, which I took to indicate seeding.

Please advise as to exactly where the seeding began and ended.

Response: The median between University Parkway and the roadway break at the Broadview apartments was aerated; slice seeded and overseeded the weekend of April 7, 2012.

- 2) You have said that the fence is temporary. That it can be relocated. When I talked with Mr. Kendrick late last week, he was going to send investigators to determine whether or not the fence could be moved so as to be relocated. (Have not heard back.) On my walk, I observed that the fence is metal and its parts fitted into bases and held together with nuts and bolts. Only the periodic supporting poles seem permanently affixed. Is this fence relocatable? Is it intended, as you say, to be temporary?

Response: The community asked if the fence was permanent or temporary. During the meeting with the TCNA meeting March 5, 2012, we discussed the fence being either temporary or permanent depending on what the community wanted to do long term after the grass seeding had a chance to reestablish itself.

The fence can be removed. Whether or not it can be relocated or used for another installation depends on how the fence is removed. Posts and hardware used for installation cannot be reused. The fence panels could be reused.

- 3) And speaking of fences, why are DOT's landscaping plans showing a perimeter fence instead of the spine like fence which appeared? I don't like the idea of either, but which did the Tuscan-Canterbury Neighborhood Association approve, please? (I don't want any configuration of a 6-foot fence, Valorie, but I wonder if the perimeter fence was lower in height and whether the neighborhood association actually knew and approved the current height and spinelike configuration.)

Response: The landscape plan prepared in 2011 by the landscape architect consultant was not presented to the community because the plan is not funded for installation (outside of budget expectations).

The landscape plan for reconstructing the median was designed to solve the existing issues on soil compaction, and poor aesthetics. The perimeter fence shown is in response to keeping pedestrians and vehicles off the median.

The 6-foot high spine-like fence was chosen by the Project Manager, Valorie LaCour in response to the goal of establishing the grass by keeping pedestrians and vehicles off the median.

The intent of getting the median green and installing the fence was to allow the TCNA and community to take over the design, landscaping, and maintenance of the median. The median greening was a preliminary step toward a broader proposed landscape planting. Although the landscape planting plan is unfunded, the BCDOT has and continues to work with the community as partners in creating an established and maintained median along 39th Street from University Parkway to Canterbury Road.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly at 443-984-4092 or email Theo.Ngongang@Baltimorecity.gov.

Sincerely,



Theo Ngongang, Chief
PLANNING SECTION

TN/VL/hd

cc: Khalil Zaied, Director
Jamie Kendrick, Deputy Director for Administration
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Valorie LaCour, Project Manager
Jamie McDonald, Engineering and Construction Division
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